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4 in 10 Adults Attended Church In Typical Week of 1987

PRINCETON, N.J. — Four adults in every 10 (40%) attended church or synagogue in a typical week in 1987.

Churchgoing has remained remarkably constant since 1969 after having declined from the high point of 49% recorded in 1955 and 1958.

The level of churchgoing in 1987 was higher among women (45% attended in a typical week) than among men (34%) and among older persons than younger. Nationally, 52% of Catholics and 38% of Protestants attended.

Southerners were most apt to attend church weekly, while Westerners had the lowest level of attendance.

To estimate the average attendance during 1987, surveys of representative samples of the adult population were made in four selected weeks during the year.

This question was asked:

Did you, yourself, happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?

Following is a selected trend since 1939. The audits from 1955 through 1987 were based on an average of several surveys during each year. The figures prior to 1955 were based on a single annual survey.

Church/Synagogue Attendance

1987	40%
1986	40
1985	42
1984	40
1983	40
1982	41
1981	41
1980	40
1979	40
1978	41
1977	41
1972	40
1969	42
1967	43
1962	46%
1958	49*
1957	47
1955	49*
1954	46
1950	39
1940	37**
1939	41

* High points.
** Low point.

Following are the results of the latest audit by key population groups:

Church/Synagogue Attendance
1987

NATIONAL	40%
Men	34
Women	45
Protestants	38
Catholics	52
18-29 years	28
30-49 years	40
50 & older	48
East	40
Midwest	40
South	44
West	33
College graduates	46
College incomplete	38
High school graduates	39
Not H.S. graduates	37
Whites	39
Blacks	42

The attendance figures are based on three in-person surveys and one telephone survey conducted in more than 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation, in four selected weeks during 1987. A total of 5,447 adults, 18 and older, were interviewed.

Majority Favor Courses On Character Education

Forty-three percent of U.S. adults say courses on values and ethical behavior should be taught in the schools, and another 13% volunteered that schools, parents and churches should all be involved. The combined figure is 56% who favor such courses.

Secretary of Education William Bennet has made character education one of his primary emphases.

The question asked in the 19th annual Gallup Poll/Phi Delta Kappa survey:

It has been proposed that the public schools include courses on 'character education' to help students develop personal values and ethical behavior. Do you think that courses on values and ethical behavior should be taught in the public schools, or do you think that this should be left to the students' parents and the churches?

	National totals	No children in school	Public school parents	Nonpublic school parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, school	43	42	45	54
No, parents and churches	36	36	38	31
Both (Volunteered)	13	13	13	11
Don't know	8	9	4	4

Content of Character Education Courses

All respondents were also asked: (1) whether it would be possible to develop character education courses acceptable to most of the people in their communities, (2) who should have the most to say about the content of such courses, and (3) whether those students who objected to the content of character education courses should be excused from attendance.

Six in 10 Americans (62%) think that it would be possible to develop subject matter for coursework on ethics and values that would be acceptable to most of the residents of their communities. Only about two in 10 (23%) feel that this would not be possible.

By a substantial margin, Americans feel that parents should have the most influence on the content of character education courses. Forty-two percent mentioned parents. The school board, mentioned by 24%, was the next most frequently mentioned group. Relatively far behind are teachers (14%) and administrators (10%). The state and federal governments are at the bottom, named by only 9% and 5% respectively.

By a margin of almost 5-3, respondents favored excusing students from character education classes if their parents object to what is taught.

The first question:

Do you think that it would be possible or not possible to develop subject matter for a character education course that would be acceptable to most of the people in this community?

Continued on page 3

	National totals	No children in school	Public school parents	Nonpublic school parents
	%	%	%	%
Possible	62	59	68	78
Not possible	23	24	22	17
Don't know	15	17	10	5

The second question:

If courses about values and ethical behavior were required in the local public schools, who do you think should have the most to say about the content of the courses? The federal government in Washington, the state government, the local school board, the school administrators, the teachers, or the parents?

	National totals	No children in school	Public school parents	Nonpublic school parents
	%	%	%	%
Parents	42	39	49	43
Local school board	24	24	24	30
Teachers	14	14	17	15
School administrators	10	11	8	7
State government	9	9	7	10
Federal government	5	5	5	6
Don't know	12	14	9	6

NOTE: Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.

The third question:

If students or their parents objected to what was taught in these classes, do you think the students should be excused from these classes or not?

	National totals	No children in school	Public school parents	Nonpublic school parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, excused	52	49	57	62
No, not excused	37	37	37	32
Don't know	11	14	6	6

The results are based on in-person interviews with 1,571 adults, 18 and older, during the period of April 10-13, 1987.

7 in 10 U.S. Adults Are Church Members

Seven in ten U.S. adults (69%) say they are members of a church or synagogue, as determined by the 1987 Gallup audit.

The 1987 figure matches the percentage found in 1986. The highest figure in the half-century trend occurred in 1947 when 76% said they were church or synagogue members. The lowest percentage was recorded in 1982 when 67% claimed membership.

In the 1987 audit, as in past years, a higher percentage of women (75%) than men (63%) report being either church or synagogue members. Also, membership increases progressively with age, from 62% of 18-29-year-olds to 76% among those 50 and older. Education does not appear to be a major factor in membership, but sharp differences are found by region, with Southerners most likely and Westerners least likely to be members. Membership levels also differ by race, with 69% of whites compared to 85% of blacks claiming church membership.

It is important to bear in mind that membership figures reported here are self-classifications, representing the percentage of people who say they are members of a church or synagogue, and thus may include some who are not actually on the rolls of a local church. It should also be noted that adherents of certain churches — for example, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches — are considered members at birth.

Here is the question and trend:

Do you happen to be a member of a church or synagogue?

Church/Synagogue Membership

	%
1987	69
1986	69
1985	71
1984	68
1983	69
1982	*67
1981	68
1980	69
1979	68
1978	68
1977	70
1976	71
1975	71
1965	73
1952	73
1947	**76
1944	75
1942	75
1940	72
1939	72
1938	73
1937	73

* Low point.
** High point.

Here are the latest results by key groups:

	%
NATIONAL	69
Men	63
Women	75
18-29 years	62
30-49 years	68
50 and older	76
East	69
Midwest	71
South	76
West	58
College grads.	73
College inc.	68
H.S. grads.	69
Not H.S. grads.	69
Whites	69
Blacks	85
Protestants	73
Catholics	85

The latest findings are based on 4,740 in-person interviews with adults 18 years and older conducted in three selected weeks in 1987 in over 300 scientifically selected localities across the nation. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 2 percentage points in either direction.

In addition to sampling error, the reader should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. *This report conforms to the standards of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

School Prayer Favored, Feel Few Would Be Offended

President Reagan has always been unequivocal in his advocacy of school prayer. So has the general public. Seventy-eight percent of the public are aware of the fact that an amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been proposed allowing school prayer. Within that group, 68% favor the amendment, and 26% oppose it. Almost three-fourths of the total sample (71%) feel that only a small percentage of the population would be offended by school prayer.

This question was asked in the 19th annual Gallup Poll/Phi Delta Kappa survey, in which 1,571 adults were interviewed in-person in the period of April 10-13, 1987.

The following question was asked of those aware of the amendment:

Do you favor or oppose an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow prayer in the public schools?

	National Totals	No children in school	Public school parents	Nonpublic school parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor	68	68	69	59
Oppose	26	26	26	35
Don't know	6	6	5	6

The second question:

Do you think that a small percentage or a large percentage of the public would be offended if prayer were permitted in the public schools?

	National Totals	Those who favor prayer	Those who oppose prayer
	%	%	%
Large percentage	18	12	35
Small percentage	71	78	53
Don't know	11	10	12

Many Believe God Performs Miracles Today

About half of Americans (47%) completely agree" that "even today miracles are performed by the power of God," while 35% "mostly agree." Relatively few "mostly disagree" (9%) or "completely disagree." (4%)

This finding is from a survey conducted for TIMES MIRROR by The Gallup Organization, Inc. during the period April 25-May 10, 1987. A total of 4,244 adults, 18 and older, were interviewed in person.

Other results show large majorities either completely agreeing or mostly agreeing that "Prayer is an important part of my family life," "We all will be called before God at the judgment day," "I am sometimes very conscious of the presence of God," and "I never doubt the existence of God."

The question and national findings:

Here are some statements on a variety of topics. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements:	**Completely agree**	**Mostly agree**	**Mostly disagree**	**Completely disagree**	**Don't know**
Prayer is an important part of my daily life	41%	35%	17%	6%	1%
We all will be called before God at the judgment day to answer for our sins	52	29	9	5	5
Even today miracles are performed by the power of God	47	35	9	4	5
I am sometimes very conscious of the presence of God	41	39	12	4	4
I never doubt the existence of God	60	28	7	3	2

Majority of Americans Say Religion Is 'Very Important' In Their Lives

A majority of Americans (53%) say religion is "very important" in their lives today, with women, older persons, Southerners, blacks, and Southern Baptists most likely to give this response.

Although there has been little change in recent years in the proportion of Americans who say religion is very important in their lives, the current figure is 22 points lower than that recorded in 1952 when 75% gave this response.

Following is the question on the importance of religion and the trend:

How important would you say religion is in your life — very important, fairly important, or not very important?

Importance of Religion

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important
	%	%	%
1987	53	32	14
1986	55	30	14
1985	55	31	13
1984	56	30	13
1983	56	30	13
1982	56	30	13
1981	56	29	14
1980	55	31	13
1978	52	32	14
1965	70	22	7
1952	75	20	5

NOTE: "No opinion" excluded

The 1987 figures are based on interviews with 4,740 adults, interviewed in five selected weeks during the year. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 2 percentage points in either direction. Larger allowances should be made for subgroups in the sample.

In addition to sampling error the reader should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. *This report conforms to the standards of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

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